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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07
NSAE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02 ACDA-10 PM-05
EB-08 COME-00 OES-07 NASA-02 SS-15 NSC-05 /102 W
----------101508 200113Z /66
R 191405Z AUG 77
FM AMCONSUL STUTTGART
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3772
AMEMBASSY BONN
INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

UNCLAS STUTTGART 1411

E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: TSPA, GW, CG
SUBJ: OTRAG : GERMAN ORBITAL ROCKET BASE IN ZAIRE
REF: STUTTGART 1357 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY
OTRAG (ORBITAL TRANSPORT UND RAKETEN AG) HAS DENIED PRESS CHARGES OF MILITARISM AND NEW COLONIALISM SURROUNDING THEIR ROCKET TESTING RANGE IN ZAIRE, CITING MUCH LOWER FIGURES ON COST AND AREA INVOLVED THAN IN EARLIER REPORTS. STRONG CRITICISM OF OTRAG'S PLANS FROM EAST EUROPEAN PRESS SOURCES CONTINUES. END SUMMARY.

1. FURTHER INFORMATION HAS CLARIFIED EARLIER REPORT OF OTRAG (ORBITAL TRANSPORT AND RAKETEN AG) ACTIVITIES CITED RETEL, AS LOCAL PRESS HAS HIGHLITED THE STORY AS A GLAMOUR ISSUE FOR LOCAL READERS, SHOWING PRIDE IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE STUTTGART FIRM. OTRAG HAS DENIED THE ACCURACY OF THE AFRIQUE-ASIE REPORT DISCUSSED REFTEL, REFUTING SUGGESTIONS THAT THEIR ROCKETS HAVE POTENTIAL
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MILITARY USE, OR THAT OTRAG'S ACTIVITIES REPRESENT A NEW GERMAN COLONIALISM IN AFRICA. RESPONDING TO FEARS REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED IN THE PRESS FROM ANGOLA, TANZANIA AND ZAMBIA THAT ZAIRE MIGHT EVENTUALLY ATTEMPT TO ADAPT OTRAG'S ROCKETS TO MILITARY MISSILES WITH ATOMIC WARLEADS, OTRAG PRESIDENT LUTZ KAYSER HAS STATED HIS ROCKETS ARE "ABSOLUTELY UNSUITED FOR MILITARY USE."

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THE SOLE REASON FOR OTRAG'S EXISTENCE, SAYS KAYSER,
IS TO ENTER THE COMMERCIAL MARKET FOR COMMUNICATION
SATELITE TRANSPORT, AT A PRICE ROUGHLY HALF THAT PRESENTLY
CHARGED BY THE UNITED STATES.

2. THE "SECRET AGREEMENT" REPORTED IN AFRIQUE-ASIE IS
A FABRICATION, ACCORDING TO KAYSER, AS IS THE CLAIM THAT
ZAIRE HAS SOLD SOVEREIGNITY TO THE GERMAN FIRM. INSTEAD,
OTRAG HAS CONTRACTED FOR THE USE OF 100,000 SQUARE
KILOMETERS IN NORTHEAST SHABA PROVINCE FOR A ROCKET
TESTING AND LAUNCHING RANGE. KAYSER ESTIMATES THE ENTIRE
POPULATION OF THE AREA AT 1,000 NOMADIC TRIBESMEN, AND
THE ONLY AUTHORITY OTRAG HAS ASSUMED OVER THEM IS TO
PROTECT THEM FROM INJURY BY CLOSING A 10 KM CIRCLE AROUND
THE LAUNCH PAD DURING A LAUNCH. THE PRICE FOR THIS
AGREEMENT IS 25 MILLION ZAIRES (65 MILLION DMARKS). THE
LAUNCH BASE, ON THE LUVUA RIVER, IS EXPECTED TO EMPLOY
30 GERMAN AND 450 AFRICAN WORKERS. TESTING WILL CONTINUE
UNTIL THE FIRST LAUNCH IN 1981.

3. OTRAG HAS ALREADY RAISED DM 50 MILLION OF THE
DM 500 MILLION KAYSER ESTIMATES WILL BE NECESSARY TO
ASSURE THE COMPANY'S SUCCESS. A REQUEST FOR FINANCING
OF DM 300 MILLION FROM THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN
REJECTED, BECAUSE, KAYSER BELIEVES, BONN PREFERS TO KEEP
ITS SPACE RESEARCH MONEY IN GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT
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INTER-EUROPEAN RESEARCH PROJECTS, SUCH AS THE GERMAN-
FRENCH "ARIANE" PROJECT. HE IS CONFIDENT HE WILL RAISE
THE MONEY PRIVATELY. ONCE HIS ROCKET IS OPERATING,
KAYSER WILL CHARGE DM 30 MILLION PER LAUNCH, USING
DM 20 MILLION OF THIS TO REPAY OUTSTANDING LOANS.
OTRAG, THEN, WILL HAVE PAID FOR ITSELF AFTER 25 LAUNCHES.

4. ADDITIONAL CRITICISM OF OTRAG IS ALSO APPEARING IN
THE EASTERN EUROPEAN PRESS. DDR TELEVISION HAS COMPLAINED
THAT THE FRG IS AGAIN BEING ALLOWED TO DEVELOP DANGEROUS
ROCKETS, ALLUDING TO THE V-1 AND V-2 HERITAGE. ON
AUGUST 17, TASS IN MOSCOW PUBLICIZED THE AFRIQUE-ASIE
REPORT ON OTRAG'S ACTIVITIES, STRESSING A "SECRET AGREE-
MENT" BETWEEN ZAIRE AND THE "WEST GERMAN MONOPOLY
OTRAG" FOR A "HUGE CENTRE FOR TESTING LONG-RANGE
MISSILES" IN THE "HEART-LAND OF AFRICA". OTRAG IS DES-
CRIBED AS BEING CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH THE FRG MILITARY-
INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX. TASS GOES ON TO CITE THE INFLATED
FIGURES AND ACCUSATIONS OF THE ORIGINAL AFRIQUE-ASIE
REPORT, CLAIMING ZAIRE HAS GRANTED OTRAG "UNLIMITED
TERRITORIAL RIGHTS". TASS ALSO MISQUOTES OTRAG SPOKESMEN
AS CONFIRMING A SECRET AGREEMENT, AND HINTS AT FRG,

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ZAIRE AND SOUTH AFRICAN COLUSION TO USE THE OTRAG LAUNCH SITE AS A BASE FOR SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES AGAINST INDEPENDENT AFRICAN COUNTRIES.

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
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To: STATE BONN
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